

# A STEP TOWARDS IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION OR GENOCIDE? IDEOLOGICAL TRANSFORMATIONS AND PROPAGANDA IN THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE IN 1911-1913

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## Abstract

This study explores two features of the Turkish nation-building process on the ideological level in the late Ottoman Empire in 1911-1913. The territory losses and population declines following the Italo-Turkish and Balkan Wars and the ensuing influx of Muslim refugees from the Balkans created a favorable environment for the Turkish government to coordinate and produce the propaganda of Turkism en-masse within the multi-ethnic Ottoman Empire. The period of 1911-1913 stands as a crucial phase in the top-down nationalization of the Ottoman masses, which later would have a great impact on the developments in the country before, during, and after World War I. This period was severely detrimental for the indigenous Christian communities of the Ottoman Empire. Thus, two particular aspects of the construction of a “Turkish” identity through the usage of state propaganda are stressed in the article: the construction of an “other” and the glorification of a common Turkish past. Both largely determined Turkish self-perception during the era and defined the code of action against non-Turkish elements of the Empire.

**Key words:** Nationalism, CUP, atrocity propaganda, minority, Muhajirs, “us” and “them”, Turan, glorification of past.

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## Introduction

Nationalism (as an ideology) and nation (as a social organization and a collective identity) has been a topic of scholarly discussion since the late 18th century, and it formed as its own subdiscipline of academic research in the 1980s. One of the core questions driving this research was whether the nation is a modern phenomenon or primordial in nature.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Oxford, Cambridge: Blackwell, 1993); Anthony D. Smith, *National Identity* (London: Penguin Books, 1991); Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London, New York: VERSO, 2006).

Theorists who considered nationalism and the nation-state as modern creations singled out the French Revolution of 1789 as a conceptual point of origin, as it formulated the concept of a citizen from a subject of a sovereign. The Revolution also had an influence on the development and nature of nationalism in European and Asian countries, and the Ottoman Empire was no exception.<sup>2</sup> Elie Kedourie, for example, describes nationalism as “a doctrine invented in Europe.”<sup>3</sup>

According to Ernest Gellner: “Nationalism creates nations, not the other way around.” But this doesn’t mean that nations are merely thinker-elite driven constructs: they are necessary creations of the historical phenomenon of industrialization.<sup>4</sup> While John Armstrong and Anthony D. Smith state that nations precede nationalism, noting a continuity between old nations and modern entities, including medieval or ancient ethnic communities which formed the ancestral foundation of the modern nation.<sup>5</sup> Eric Hobsbawm, who considers the “nation” as a recent historical invention linking nationalism to industrialization and ensuing developments of communication and literacy, also acknowledges the existence of “proto-nations”.<sup>6</sup> This demonstrates that there is no universal theory of nation or nationalism of a global context; yet, certain factors are considered crucial in nation-building processes.

By analyzing the aforementioned literature, we are able to identify certain key factors which are crucial in nation-building processes. An entity to be perceived as a nation should unite people who speak the same language, have a perception of their “homeland”/the concept of territoriality, and retain some sense of a common past or “myth” of a common origin.<sup>7</sup> However, a crucial element in the nation-building process is not solely the various collective symbols and values that, as “cultural markers,” differentiate communities – but also divide “us/ingroup” from “them/outgroup”. As Anthony Smith formulates: “The fact that outsiders are ‘strangers’ to us, that we cannot communicate with them and that ‘their’ ways seem incomprehensible to us, derives its meaning and significance from an already existing sense of shared experiences and values, a feeling of community, of ‘us-ness’ and group belonging.”<sup>8</sup> Not only is the perception of a common past a unifying factor, but it creates shared meaning that group members “belong together” and “have a common destiny for the future.”<sup>9</sup> In Gellner’s words: “Two men are of the same nation if and only if

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2 Elie Kedourie, *Nationalism* (London: Hutchinson University Library, 1962), 12-13.

3 Ibid., 1.

4 Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, 55-56.

5 John Armstrong, *Nations Before Nationalism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1982); Anthony D. Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* (USA: Blackwell Publishing, 1988).

6 Eric Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

7 Anthony D. Smith, *The Ethnic Revival in the Modern World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 69.

8 Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*, 49.

9 Rupert Emerson, *From Empire to Nation: The Rise of Self-Assertion of Asian and African Peoples* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1959), 95.

they recognize each other as belonging to the same nation. In other words, nations maketh man; nations are the artefacts of men's convictions and loyalties and solidarities."<sup>10</sup>

A wide array of existing scholarship covers the Second Constitutional (1908-1918) and Republican (1923-present) periods from both historical and theoretical perspectives. Taking Smith's notion on Turkish nation as "a nation by design,"<sup>11</sup> with this article, we have set out to identify and illuminate two aspects in Turkish nation-building process led by the ruling Committee of Union and Progress: the construction of the "other" through propaganda, and the glorification of Turkic past. We have chosen to analyze the years 1911-1913, as the Italo-Turkish and Balkan Wars and the accompanying territorial losses and influxes of Muslim refugees – *muhajirs* from the Balkans – created a favorable environment for the Turkish elite to coordinate and disseminate propaganda of Turkish nationalism within a largely multi-ethnic Ottoman Empire. The year 1913 is chosen as the end date of this analysis, given that the radical ultra-nationalist wing of the CUP seized power in a coup d'état in 1913, concentrating the decision-making process into the hands of a single party and establishing a proto-fascist regime. This resulted in the institution of policies aimed at nationalizing the masses from above and forcibly "Turkifying" the state, radicalizing the methods used to do so prior to 1913. This chosen period of analysis is also important, given its status as a pre-genocidal period which reflected both state-led hate speech and the deliberate marginalization of victimized groups.

## **We – the Muslims, they – the Christians**

The Turkish nationalist elite's commitment to nationalization policies were influenced by both internal and external factors. Although the pursuit of modernization can be traced back to the second half of 19th century, it was largely instituted by the Committee of Union and Progress (*İttihad ve Terakki Cemiyeti*, hereafter the "CUP" or "İttihadists"), who came to power in the Ottoman Empire as a result of a coup d'état in July 1908. The ideology of the Committee was Turkism, which was developed under the influence of European socio-philosophical and political thought and contrasted with official ideology of the empire: Ottomanism.<sup>12</sup> Nationalization, which was openly discussed in party periodicals (*Türk, Şûra-yı Ümmet, Osmanlı*) by party-affiliated ideologues and distributed through pamphlets and personal messages between CUP members before the coup, became a prominent agenda item after the CUP seized power. Theoretically, Ottomanism viewed all Ottomans as equals, and this view was reflected in the re-instituted constitution. However, high-ranking İttihadists assigned the Turkish segment of the population a dominant role in the Ottoman Empire. When the CUP began negotiating with various

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10 Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, 7.

11 Smith, *National Identity*, 100, 104.

12 Ottomanism was a type of nationalism originated by Tanzimat reforms in the 19th century in the Ottoman Empire. The aim of Ottomanism was to establish single citizenship from diverse religious and ethnic communities of the country. For the non-Muslims of the Empire, this would turn the empire into a melting pot.

ethno-religious groups of the empire to gain their support to dethrone Sultan Abdul Hamid II, their Turkic-centric interpretation of Ottomanism was strategically concealed.<sup>13</sup>

The ensuing Turkification of the Ottoman Empire was not solely generated by CUP ideology; its enactment was the outcome of several internal and external socio-political developments. Sociologist Ayhan Aktar describes the Turkification policies of the 1920s as “a set of policies aimed at establishing the unconditional supremacy of Turkish national identity in nearly all aspects of social and economic life” in the land that was to become the country of the Turks.<sup>14</sup> This definition of Turkification also applies to the Second Constitutional Period, although the policy was enacted and initially carried out under the cover of Ottomanism.

After 1908, many of high-ranking CUP officials and party ideologues used the term “Ottoman”, but in reference to Turks and Turkified Muslims, being brought up in Turkish traditions, and communicating in Turkish.<sup>15</sup> A professor at the University of Istanbul and journalist formerly affiliated with the CUP, Ahmed Emin (Yalman, 1888-1972), stressed that the Ittihadists used the phrases “Ottoman” and “unity of all elements of population in Turkey without distinction of creed and religion” not as a ground for establishing equal citizenship, but as a cover for assimilating non-Turkish elements of the population into a Turkified state. According to Emin, this policy deepened the gulf between Turks and non-Turks – who, after centuries of living together in some regions, had lived remarkably similar lifestyles.<sup>16</sup> This elite-driven policy of homogenizing the country would first lead to the assimilation of certain non-Turkish groups within the multi-ethnic and multi-religious empire, followed by state-sponsored genocides committed against non-assimilated and “undesirable” ethnic groups within the empire.

After the revolution, the Ittihadists needed a justification to harbor Turkism within the Ottoman Empire – and external developments provided exactly that. One particular aim of the coup in 1908 was to maintain the territorial integrity of the Empire by intercepting and halting the new Russo-British reform program for Macedonia and the possible secession of the Balkans.

However, after the coup, several geopolitical shifts occurred: Austria-Hungary officially announced the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which had been occupied since 1876. Bulgaria declared the adjunction of Eastern Thrace and the proclamation of an independent kingdom. Crete was joined to Greece. The country was involved in Italo-Turkish (or Tripolitanian War, 1911-1912) and the Balkan Wars (1912-1913), which

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13 Şükrü M. Hanioglu, *Preparation for a Revolution: The Young Turks, 1902-1908* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 299.

14 Ayhan Aktar, “Conversion of a ‘Country’ into a ‘Fatherland’: The Case of Turkification Examined, 1923-1934,” in *Nationalism in the Troubled Triangle: Cyprus, Greece and Turkey*, eds. A. Aktar, N. Kızılyürek, and U. Özkırmılı (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 22.

15 Arsen Avagyan, *Геноцид армян: механизмы принятия и исполнения решений* [The Armenian Genocide. The Mechanisms of Deceison-Making and Implementation] (Yerevan: AGMI, 2013), 32.

16 Ahmed Emin, *The Development of Modern Turkey as Measured by its Press* (New York: Longmans, Green&Co., Agents, 1914), 101.

led to large losses of population and wide swaths of territory in Southeastern Europe.<sup>17</sup> Despite the impact of these losses, they served as organic catalysts for the strengthening of a national identity – and the CUP capitalized on it.<sup>18</sup> The situation of Muslims in the “lost lands” and the sufferings of *muhajirs* became a tool that was not only for external use in Ottoman foreign policy, but also comprised internal propaganda that was circulated within nationalist discourse.<sup>19</sup>

Several party members and ideologues acknowledged the impact of historic defeats on their own worldview on nationalism. As CUP ideologue Halide Edib (1884-1964) noted, the years 1910-1912 ignited her “final plunge into nationalism”.<sup>20</sup> Hussein Jahid, the editor-in-chief of the semi-official newspaper *Tanin*, shares the same opinion, asserting: “The present war represents a great defeat for Turkey, but it has at least had the effect of rousing all the Turks and Mohammedans in the world from their lethargy. It has put clearly before them the dangers to which they are exposed.”<sup>21</sup> Furthermore, Edib noted that Turkish nationalism intensified within the Ottoman Empire as a result of the European “double-standard” practiced towards the state’s Christian and Muslim populations.<sup>22</sup> The Turkish daily publication, *İkdam*, generalized common sentiments in writing that the Balkan Wars were regarded by Europe “...as a war of civilization against barbarism, of knowledge against ignorance, in short, a war against Turkish oppression.”<sup>23</sup> The best summary of the Ittihadist mindset is given by Ahmed Emin, who stressed that the Turkish national self-consciousness was acquired through defeats, Turkophobia, and humiliation.<sup>24</sup>

The Italo-Turkish War also provided the conditions for nationalist intellectuals to start constructing the concept of the “other”, which served two purposes: the mobilization of the home front during the war, and the en-masse nationalization of the Ottoman Empire. The dichotomy of an in-group and an outgroup – of “us” versus “them” – comprises the basic elements of all nationalist movements. The rhetorical differentiation between the groups was steeped in the Empire’s longstanding Christian-Muslim division, since the majority of the Muslim population possessed a religious identity, rather than an ethnic or national identity.<sup>25</sup> Between 1911-1912, Russian journalist and writer Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams,

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17 Richard Hall, *The Balkan Wars 1912-1913: Prelude to the First World War* (London, New York: Routledge, 2000), 11-12.

18 More on the links between the Balkan Wars and Turkish Nationalism see Taner Akçam, *A Shameful Act: the Armenian Genocide and the Question of Turkish Responsibility* (New York: Metropolitan Books, Henry Holt and Company, 2006), 82-83.

19 Erol Köroğlu, “From Propaganda to National Identity Construction in Turkey,” in *Nations, Identities and the First World War: Shifting Loyalties to the Fatherland*, eds. Nico Wouters, Laurence van Ypersele (London, New York, Oxford, New Delhi, Sydney: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018), 51-52.

20 Halide Edib, *Memoirs of Halide Edib* (New York, London: The Century Co., 1926), 312.

21 Tekin Alp, *The Turkish and Pan-Turkish Ideal* (Constantinople: Admiralty War Staff, Intelligence Division, 1917), 13.

22 Edib, *Memoirs*, 333.

23 “A Pessimistic Prophecy,” *The Orient* (Constantinople), 4 December 1912, vol. III, No. 49.

24 Emin, *The Development of Modern*, 107, 108.

25 Roderic H. Davison, “Turkish Attitudes Concerning Christian-Muslim Equality in the Nineteenth Century,”

after meeting and interviewing several of the prominent CUP leaders in Constantinople, concluded that they referred to Islam with almost the same hatred as Voltaire's contempt for the Catholic Church. However, their situation was different in that they had to hide their hatred, as the national and religious self-consciousness was still merged together within the majority of the population.<sup>26</sup> According to the CUP ideologue Munis Tekinalp (Moiz Cohen, 1883-1961):

The Nationalists devoted their efforts from the very first moment to raising the economic life of the country. It is, however, interesting to note that they wisely refrained from lending the banner of pure Nationalism to economic agitators. They sought after a judicious mingling of the religious and national impulses. They realized very clearly that the still abstract ideals of Nationalism could not be expected to attract the masses, the lower classes, composed of uneducated and illiterate people. It was found more expedient to reach these classes under the flag of religion. Religion has a universal appeal, whereas Nationalism is a finer instrument which requires good training if it is to be properly handled.<sup>27</sup>

Thus, the CUP affiliated press presented the Italo-Turkish and Balkan Wars as wars of the Christian world against the Muslim world. Hussein Jahid reflects on the question of Adrianople in *Tanin* in the same vein. The city was taken by Bulgarian and Serbian armies during the First Balkan War, and its status became the subject of fierce negotiations. The loss of Adrianople created a political scandal in Constantinople, as Adrianople was a former capital city and held immense symbolic meaning to the Ottoman Empire. Jahid presented the question of Adrianople's fate to that of Islam vs. Christianity: "They want to take Adrianople from us so as to insult and humiliate the Moslem world."<sup>28</sup>

The party ideologues constructed this differentiation through propaganda in press and literature, which not only targeted Christians who fought on the opposite front of the war, but also the Christian subjects of the Empire, including them into the artificially-constructed image of the "other".<sup>29</sup> Tekinalp described the Balkan nations as "false friends" who deceived Turks and "showed their true colors" during the Balkan Wars. These ideologues argued that the attitudes of the non-Turkish elements of the empire and the "betrayal" of the Muslim Albanians were eye-opening for Turks, as it demonstrated that the survival and future existence of Turks depended solely on their political,

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*The American Historical Review* 59 (1954): 844-864.

26 Ariadna Turkova, *Старая Турция и младотурки. Годъ въ Константинополе* [Old Turkey and the Young Turks: A Year in Constantinople] (Petrograd, 1916), 137.

27 Tekin Alp, *The Turkish and Pan-Turkish Ideal*, 22.

28 "Noli Me Tangere," *The Orient*, 20 August 1913, vol. IV, No. 34.

29 Ümit Kurt, Doğan Gürpınar, "The Balkan Wars and the Rise of the Reactionary Modernist Utopia in Young Turk Thought and the Journal *Türk Yurdu* [Turkish Homeland]," *Nations and Nationalism* 21 (2015): 361.



social, intellectual, and economic power and unity. As Turks plunged into war with the Bulgarians, Serbians, and Greeks, as presented by Tekinalp, “...the revolt of the bad element among the people began, the revolt of former “friends” who now one by one left the poor desolated country and nation in the lurch.”<sup>30</sup> The image of Balkan “treachery” in the Balkan Wars – of peoples who “blinded” the Turkish nation with lies – was quickly adapted and transferred to the remaining Christians of the Empire, nourishing the image of the Christian “other” within the Empire who could also become dangerous.

These defeats also had a practical significance for the CUP. With the loss of the Balkans, the country became more homogeneous, and disseminated propaganda could more-effectively reach its target populations. The suffering of Muslim emigrants and refugees at the hands of Christian authorities additionally provided a ground for nationalistic propaganda to flourish and incited anger against the remaining Christian populations of the Empire to foment. In the eyes of the CUP ideologues, Balkan Muslim refugees became both a target and tool for propaganda. Policies of demographic engineering became common in the Ottoman Empire and would be practiced in all Christian-populated areas. In 1911, Mehmed Nazim submitted a plan to the CUP’s Central Committee that, if approved, would gradually populate Macedonia with Bosnian Muslims; the Empire’s defeat in the Balkan War ultimately prevented its implementation.<sup>31</sup> According to official sources, 500,000 to 600,000 refugees had been expelled from the former Balkan provinces of the Empire, and the state was looking for ways and means of settling them in Asia Minor. In an interview with a French diplomat, the Turkish ambassador to Austria-Hungary and former Grand Vizier, Hilmi Pasha, suggested to resettle them in “the district of Adana, [which] is so fertile that it is like a little Egypt,” and expressed hope that French government would assist with the project.<sup>32</sup> A communiqué from the Grand Vizier to the Vali of Adana, dated 25 March 1909, encouraged the countering of Armenian settlement in the empty lands near Sis and Kozan by promoting the settlement of Muslim tribes in the region.<sup>33</sup> Vahan Minakhorian,<sup>34</sup> an Armenian politician, stated that the authorities directed the Balkan emigrants to the eastern fringes of Armenian regions of the Empire. He recalled the appearance of the first wave of *muhajirs* in Samsun who (being purposely incited and agitated against Christians in the city) were opportunistically placed to stage an attack on the Greek or Armenian quarters of the city.<sup>35</sup>

30 Tekin Alp, *The Turkish and Pan-Turkish Ideal*, 11.

31 Avagyan, *The Armenian Genocide*, 49.

32 Raymond Kévorkian, *The Armenian Genocide: a Complete History* (London, New York: I.B. Tauris, 2011), 141.

33 Bedross Der Matossian, *The Horrors of Adana: Revolution and Violence in the Early Twentieth Century* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2022), 55.

34 Vahan Minakhorian (1884-1946) was an active Armenian public figure, a member of the Social-Revolutionary Party of Armenia. During the Armenian Genocide, he was deported from Samsun with the local population – yet he escaped and survived the Genocide. Shortly following his escape, he became an MP in the Parliament of the First Armenian Republic (1918-1920).

35 Vahan Minakhorian, *1915 թուականի արհաւիրքի օրեր* [The Year 1915: Days of Disaster] (Venice: St. Ghazar Press, 1949), 53.

The CUP's demographic engineering aimed to alter the demographic composition of Armenian regions by purposefully resettling Muslim refugees from the Balkan Wars in Armenian regions, but they also attempted to control Armenians through the *muhajirs*. In his memoirs, Minakhorian recalls that CUP party delegate in Samsun, Ismail Sidki reached out to the local branch of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation in 1912 in the hopes of scheduling a meeting. Although Minakhorian was not a member of the organization, he was invited to the meeting and participated with ARF members. During the meeting, several questions were discussed: the condition of Armenians in the "eastern provinces" and Cilicia, the "Armenian reform project," and Ottoman promises of equality and protection given by the constitution six years prior that, to date, had remained unfulfilled. Sidki announced that the state's hands were effectively tied due to issues with foreign interference, state finances, and administrative problems, and the problem of Muslim refugees from the Balkans. Sidki would further claim that it was very hard to keep these refugees from attacking the Armenians, warning the attendees: "I am kindly informing you that they have a grudge against you. You cannot imagine what adversity they would have caused if we had not intervened. Try to avoid mistakes that could irritate the Turkish crowd." Minakhorian, in his reflections, noted that Sidki's "benevolent" warning sounded like a threat from a Turkish official.<sup>36</sup>

Ittihadist ideologues fed the refugees with fear of the new territorial losses and presented Christian national minorities as advocates of this potential danger. For example: during the Balkan Wars, the service of Armenian soldiers in the Ottoman army remained largely hidden from public view; their loyalty to their state was not covered by the Turkish press, as it clashed with the Turkish "national project" pursued by the CUP and Ottoman elites.<sup>37</sup> Press publications about Ottoman losses were rewritten to whip fear among Muslims and agitate the masses, claiming that a new disaster would befall the country if Turks did not resort to self-defense.<sup>38</sup> During the massacres of Armenians in Adana region in 1909, there were Muslims who spoke about the massacres with sorrow and fear. However, they too paid tribute to the state's propaganda, noting that this was the only way to address intersocial tensions, because otherwise: "they would have been attacked and overpowered by the Christians."<sup>39</sup> There is no doubt that the local CUP members were complicit in the massacres and played a primary role in instigating the Muslim population of Adana against the Armenians through publications like the *İtidal* newspaper, which spread notions that the Armenians instigated "riots" to reestablish the Kingdom of Cilicia.<sup>40</sup>

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36 Ibid., 58.

37 Fikret Adanır, "Non-Muslims in the Ottoman Army and the Ottoman Defeat in the Balkan War," in *A Question of Genocide: Armenians and Turks at the end of the Ottoman Empire*, eds. Ronald Suny, Fatma Goccek, Norman Naimark (NY: Oxford University Press, 2011), 123.

38 Chiriot Daniel, McCauley Clark, *Why Not Kill Them All? The Logic and Prevention of Mass Political Murder* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 208.

39 Charles Woods, *The Danger Zone of Europe: Changes and Problems in the Near East* (London: "T.F. Unwin," 1911), 171.

40 Der Matossian, *The Horrors of Adana*, 148-149.



According to the testimony of Vahan Papazyan, a member of the Ottoman Parliament: amid the outbreak of the Italo-Turkish War, the CUP clubs incited the masses against the Christians so much “as if we [Armenians] were the ones fighting against them in Tripoli.”<sup>41</sup> This anti-Armenian attitude and rhetoric was not limited to the Committee of Union and Progress: the original cabinet formed from the CUP was replaced with Kâmil Pasha’s cabinet on 30 October 1912, forcing CUP to be a political opposition in the country for almost six months. The new minister of the interior, Ahmed Reshid (Rey), who was affiliated with The Freedom and Accord Party (*Hürriyet ve İtilâf*), laid the blame for the Empire’s defeats in the Balkans squarely on the hands of two Armenians: the CUP-affiliated MP Bedros Hallajian, and his cabinet colleague Gabriel Noradunkyan.<sup>42</sup> In the press, Armenian and Greek deputies were caricatured as traitors of the nation; one particular cartoon depicted an art gallery with a painting of Hallajian, implying to readers that he was a “sellout”, a betrayer of the nation.<sup>43</sup>

Following the Balkan Wars, Armenians in the Empire’s eastern provinces were placed under more severe pressure. Propaganda generated in the wake of the state’s defeat in the Balkan Wars had a huge impact on society, igniting outbursts of fanaticism. The Turkish political elite was well aware of the fact that this could provoke reactions and incitements against local non-Muslims; incitements against Armenians in particular were chronicled in Ottoman Armenian newspapers of the era. For example, Armenian newspaper *Ashkhatanq* reported how the Mufti of Silvan (Diarbekir) preached against the Armenians during *Bayram*, as well as how the police of Adana publicly insulted the Armenian nation.<sup>44</sup> The newspaper also informed readers about the killing of an Armenian, Melkon Mir-Sakocian, during an armed *devriye* (patrol) attack – consisting of Balkan *muhajirs* – on a group of well-known Armenians at night.<sup>45</sup> In successive issues, journalists analyzed the situation, stating that:

Since the beginning of war ...we [Armenians] had a fear that Muslim refugees from occupied Rumelia, by pouring into Armenian provinces would pour their accumulated bile of revenge and religious fanaticism on the heads of the Armenian people. Unfortunately, not only were our suspicions justified, but this time, instead of the ignorant, fanatical crowd, the educated officials, whose sole duty is to guard public safety, began to act. ...From the point of view of sound state policy, the

41 Vahan Papazyan, *Իմ յուշերը* [My Memoirs], Vol. II (Beirut: Hamazgayin Ynkerutyun, 1952), 155.

42 Hans-Lukas Kieser, *Talaat Pasha: Father of Modern Turkey, Architect of Genocide* (Princeton & Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2018), 128.

43 Bora Isyar, “The Origins of Turkish Republican Citizenship: The Birth of Race,” *Nations and Nationalism* 11 (2005): 346.

44 «Ո՞ւր է պատասխանատվությունը» [Where is the Responsibility?], *Ashkhatanq* (Van), 10 August 1913, No. 39.

45 «Մելքոն Միր-Սաքոյեանի սպանումը» [The Killing of Melkon Mir-Sakocian], *Ashkhatanq*, 31 August 1913, No. 42.

leaders of the government cannot be justified, when they surrendered the safety of life of the Armenian people in the conditions of anxiety and tension to the hands of Rumeli officials, who were burned in the furnace of hatred and revenge.<sup>46</sup>

In a dispatch to the Russian Foreign Minister from the Russian Empire's ambassador to the Ottoman Empire Mikhail Nikolayevich von Giers, dated 7 April 1913, the gravity of the situation was demonstrated. Cited in the dispatch was an incident in March of 1913, in which a Kurd was killed in the region of Bitlis; the victim's relatives accused the region's Armenians of this murder, and turmoil ensued. After a conversation between the ambassador and the Grand Vizier, the case was presented to the public as "an assassination of an Armenian by an Armenian" as not to incite Muslims of the region against Armenians.<sup>47</sup> On 5 April, the government issued a new statement regarding another crisis; this time, in connection with an explosion in Erzinka (Erzincan) and the discovery of other explosives in Armenian houses. In this regard, *Tanin* periodical clarifies that the blast was not motivated to attack the state, but rather to address "the ulcers with which Eastern Anatolia is covered."<sup>48</sup> Ambassador von Giers expressed hope in the dispatch that the local government authorities that started the reform-centric negotiations would work to prevent clashes between people. Based on a secret source, Giers was informed during a meeting with Interior Minister Hadji Adil that while incidents of such scope may happen all over the country the government would not blame a whole nation for that. This assurance, however, was followed by an attack on Armenian women by Turkish gendarmes on the streets of Hadjin.<sup>49</sup>

In another report sent to the Foreign Minister, Ambassador Giers recited the content of a memorandum of Armenian Patriarch of Constantinople Hovhannes Arsharuni to Grand Vizier Mahmud Shevket Pasha from 29 April 1913. According to the Patriarch, the belief was intensifying among Muslims that Christians were the cause of all misfortunes experienced by the Empire's inhabitants. Citing other developments indicative of this escalation, the Patriarch then spoke of the reappearance of the organizers and perpetrators of the massacres of Armenians in Adana Province (who constantly visited the provincial governor), as well as the anti-Christian propaganda circulating within Adana's newspapers and press. The Patriarch also raised the issue of impunity: the memorandum provided the example of an event from Van, where (as of the memorandum's publication) 150 Armenians were imprisoned on charges of murdering a Muslim, while the Muslims who killed the Armenian teacher and priest were released. The memorandum further states

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46 Տագնապը անցավ բայց պատճառները կը մնան [Anxiety Passed, but the Causes Remain], *Ashkhatanq*, 7 September 1913, No. 45.

47 Сборник дипломатических документов. Реформы в Армении. 26 ноября 1912 года – 10 мая 1914 года [Collection of Diplomatic Documents. Reforms in Armenia. November 26, 1912 - May 10, 1914 (Petrograd: State Printing House, 1915), 29-31.

48 Ibid.

49 Ibid.

that Muslims were often simply rewarded for killing Armenians when tensions led to an outbreak of violence.<sup>50</sup>

The Christian-Muslim division on the ground, as a reflection and consequence of state-led propaganda, manifested in Armenian-Kurdish relationships, as well. In the aforementioned memorandum, Patriarch Arsharuni also appealed for establishing order in the Empire's Armenian regions; Armenians were broadly disarmed, while the majority of the Kurds were armed, and attacks on the Armenian peasantry by Kurds were frequent. In response to this, *Tasviri Efkar* published an open letter from Severeqli Pasha Zade Mehmed Fikri, denying the Patriarch's claims. Although the phrases "Kurdish nation" and "Armenian nation" were mentioned several times in the open letter, the author drew attention to the fact that Kurds were Muslims, while Armenians were Christians, and that this division should be taken into consideration by the government while approaching the Armenian-Kurdish question. In claiming that the most vital question for the Kurds was the question of land, the author expands: "The Kourds whom the Patriarch qualifies as pillagers and brigands, are a people that have always been faithful to the State. A large number of Kourdish officers and soldiers have shed their blood for the Ottoman Fatherland."<sup>51</sup>

Armenian Patriarch Arsharuni's multiple appeals to the *High Porte* also called attention to the distribution of free public lands to incoming Muslim refugees, but the Patriarch's appeals remained unanswered. The aim of allocating these lands to Balkan refugees was to increase the concentration of Muslims in the Empire's eastern fringes and expel the "unreliable" Armenian population from their indigenous lands.

In addition to this religious differentiation, there was also a sense of social "injustice" that pervaded the social fabric of the Ottoman Empire. The humiliation of defeat inflicted by the state's "former servants" is clearly evident in the writings of both Ittihadists and party ideologues. The defeats in the Italo-Turkish and Balkan Wars were presented by CUP intellectuals as a shameful, "humiliating catastrophe" because they were caused by former *rayah*.<sup>52</sup> In light of this context, the labelling of Christians gained new momentum. In his writings, Yusuf Akchura (1876-1935), an ideologue of Pan-Turkism, pondered how the "Ottomans" could be defeated by their former subjects: "The Bulgarians – the milkmen – the Serbians – the swineherds – even the Greeks – the tavern keepers – defeated us, the Ottomans who had been their masters for 500 years. This harsh truth, which we could not even imagine, may be a hard slap in the face that will open our eyes and lead us to think rationally."<sup>53</sup> After the fall of Yannena, an editorial in *Tasviri Efkar* exclaimed that the seizure of that Ottoman fortress by the Hellenes, whom Turks considered "even lower than

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50 Ibid., 32-35. On 20 May (2 June) 1913, the Patriarch handed over a new memorandum to the Grand Vizier on the ground that since the last memorandum the situation of Armenians had worsened. Ibid., 38.

51 "The Poor Maligned Kourds," *The Orient*, 4 June 1913, vol. IV, No. 23.

52 More on the discriminatory epithets given to the Christians in the Ottoman Empire see Davison, "Turkish Attitudes Concerning Christian-Muslim Equality," 855.

53 Cited in Kurt, Gürpınar, "The Balkan Wars," 352.

dogs”, was something unimaginable and called for silencing the pain through an act of revenge.<sup>54</sup>

The idea of the Balkan nations being the “former servants” of the Turks is one shared across publications; an editorial of *The Orient*,<sup>55</sup> in which *muhajirs* trekking in front of the advancing Bulgarian army were interviewed, concluded that their escape was not motivated by fear of the Bulgarian troops, but the will to live under Muslim rule. Moreover, the refugees also claimed that their villages were burnt by the retreating Turkish army – not by the advancing Bulgarian forces. Through this voyage, the Muslims of the Balkans chose: “... a long, weary migration and an unknown future, rather than the comfort of their ancestral homes under foreign rule, especially the rule of those who were once their *rayah*, – their flocks and herds.”<sup>56</sup>

The physical proximity of *muhajirs* to Armenian-inhabited regions of the Empire, their suffering and an emerging hatred towards Christians would be instrumentalized by the Committee of Union and Progress for a bigger agenda: during the implementation of the Armenian Genocide, *muhajir* refugees took a direct role in perpetrating the massacres.<sup>57</sup>

## Construction of the Past

An important factor to constructing a nation is the shared understanding of a common past; however, as Hobsbawm states, it is not inherently what has happened that has actually been preserved in popular memory – rather, it is what has been selected, written, pictured, popularized and institutionalized by elites.<sup>58</sup> Nationalists or political elites often use narratives to unify intended audiences by developing a sense of solidarity to mobilize followers. The rhetoric of these narratives frequently shares similarities across contexts, generally depict three key elements: the “glorious past,” a “degraded present,” and the “utopian future”.<sup>59</sup>

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54 Aram Andonian, *Պատկերագրող ընդարձակ պատմություն Պաշտանեան պատերազմին* [Complete Illustrated History of the Balkan War], vol. V (Constantinople: Onik Arzuman, 1913), 887, 888. Dog was one of the derogatory epithets used against Christians in the Ottoman Empire. During the counterrevolution in 13 April 1909 a wave of Armenian massacres broke out in the region of Adana and surroundings. A Turkish soldier in a letter dated 20 May 1909 wrote to his family: “We killed thirty thousand of the infidel dogs, whose blood flowed through the streets of Adana.” See Akçam, *A Shameful Act*, 70.

55 *The Orient* is an English-language weekly newspaper published in Constantinople from 1910 to 1922, with reporting on contemporary events, politics, and society. Each number contains reprints from Turkish, Armenian and Jewish contemporary press.

56 “Moslem trekking,” *The Orient*, 27 November 1912, vol. III, No. 48.

57 Akçam, *A Shameful Act*, 87; Erik-Jan Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History*, 3rd ed. (London: I.B. Tauris, 2004), 117.

58 Eric Hobsbawm, “Introduction: Inventing Traditions,” in *The Invention of Tradition*, eds. Eric Hobsbawm, Terence Ranger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 13.

59 Matthew Levinger, Paula Franklin Lytle, “Myth and Mobilization: the Triadic Structure of Nationalist Rhetoric,” *Nations and Nationalism* 7 (2001): 178.

For the construction of the Turkish national identity, the CUP elites used the same methods as the French, German and Italian nationalists. As the defeats in Italo-Turkish and Balkan Wars, losses of territories, and poor economic conditions provided a composite image of the “degraded present”, the aim of the Ittihadist nationalists was to mobilize the population by feeding their audiences narratives about the “glorious past”, motivating them to work towards a “bright future”. Their aim was to reinvent/create a single, unified “past”, in such a way as to explain the present situation in accessible terminology and draw upon prospects for possible solutions.

Accordingly, CUP ideologues collected different interpretations of the past and wove these interpretations into strands of communal traditions in order to produce one single, coherent narrative that would provide an emotionally satisfying account of the present situation.<sup>60</sup> Ahmed Emin admits that after the loss of Crete in 1908, the island was declared a “sacred” totem, and the emotions of the people were systematically manipulated through social institutions to create an atmosphere of collective self-confidence, invincibility, and power to challenge the Empire’s neighboring states.<sup>61</sup> Assessment of this loss in contemporary rhetoric was important: Halide Edib referred to the outcome of the Balkan Wars as “one of the greatest defeats in Turkish history,” and the human loss of Muslims in Macedonia as constituting one of “the greatest massacres of the last hundred years.”<sup>62</sup> Defeats in wartime, however, were not the only signifier of the “degraded present” targeted by CUP ideologues: “polluted” language and culture, elements of social life and “harmful ideologies”, such as Ottomanism, were also attacked by CUP ideologues on this basis.

An unprecedented wave of study of Turkic history and creation of literature began during the Balkan Wars. Thanks to the efforts and finances of the CUP government, Turkish intellectuals were united in associations and clubs that targeted and structured the transmission of nationalistic propaganda. The central ideologue of the CUP and the father of modern Turkish nationalism, Ziya Gokalp (1876-1924), wrote that Bulgarians were inspired by their fiery traditions during the Balkan Wars, while the Turks were inspired by their “cold rules”, claiming that the result was the victory of history over geography. He suggested studying Turkish history from all aspects: “the stone engravings or deer skins, on the one hand, and on the folk poems, folk tales, and epics, on the other.”<sup>63</sup> Moreover, he argued that the Ottomanists’ belief that all peoples living in the Ottoman Empire constituted a single nation was a “grave mistake”, because “within this collection of peoples there were several culturally independent nations.”<sup>64</sup>

From the end of the 19th century onwards, Turkish studies started to develop within the Ottoman Empire, partially in response to the “Orientalist” movement within European academic institutions. Within this movement, many intellectuals and historians

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60 Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*, 191-192.

61 Emin, *The Development of Modern Turkey as Measured by its Press*, 102.

62 Edib, *Memoirs*, 333.

63 Ziya Gokalp, *Turkish Nationalism and Western Civilization* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959), 95.

64 Ibid., 136.

“reinvented” their past, language, and literature – in some cases, going back hundreds or thousands of years to reinterpret the past. Nascent research within the body of Turkish scholarship also embraced the nations of Central Asia, assessing their racial kinship and declaring that the Turks were their descendants.<sup>65</sup> Furthermore: before the revolution, racial and nationalist discourse was strong in the CUP’s periodical, *Türk*, published in Cairo between 1903 and 1907. The contributors of the journal had even chosen Turkic pen names such as “Oğuz”, “Uygur”, “Özbek”, “Tuğrul”, “Turgud”, “Kuneralp”, and “Uluğ.”<sup>66</sup> After 1908, this course was maintained by the CUP. The political ideal of Turan, as a national symbol and a place of origin of all Turkic peoples, was vital in strengthening a newly-constructed Turkish identity.<sup>67</sup> By contributing to the periodical, these ideologues created “national” mythical stories that exalted Turkic heroes and dedicated songs to Turan.

In 1910, CUP ideologues Yusuf Akchura (1876-1935) and Ahmet Aghagözü (1869-1939) wrote to defend Genghis Khan against those who considered him a villain. During the Italo-Turkish War, Gokalp in his poem “The New Attila” reminded readers that the Turks were the generation of Attila and were going to defeat the Europeans as the Huns did.<sup>68</sup> Likewise, Omer Seyfeddin (1884-1920), in a patriotic story published during the Italo-Turkish War reminded his readers (through his protagonist, Kenan) that Attila trampled over the Europeans “as if they were dogs”.<sup>69</sup> In the poem entitled “Turan”, published in 1911, Gokalp refused to accept the contemporary description of Attila and Genghis Khan, claiming that the relevant academic historiography deliberately defamed these “Turkish national heroes”.<sup>70</sup> Comparing Attila and Genghis to Alexander the Great and Julius Caesar, he concluded that these figures were “the heroic figures which stand for the proud fame of my race.” For Gokalp, the Turkish legendary ancestor Oghuz Khan was the greatest among the heroes that inspired him. At the end of the aforementioned poem, Gokalp emphasized that the fatherland of the Turks was not solely Turkey, but rather, “broad eternal Turania”. Claiming Gokalp to be “the great apostle of Turanianism”, Tekinalp concurs with him.<sup>71</sup>

65 Jacob M. Landau, *Pan-Turkism: from Irredentism to Cooperation* (Bloomington, Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1995), 30.

66 Hanioglu, *Preparation for a Revolution*, 66.

67 *Turan* is a term widely used in scientific literature from the 18th century onwards to denote Central Asia. It includes modern Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and northern parts of Afghanistan and Pakistan. The idea of Turan as a cradle of the origin of Turkic people and as a future ideal extended beyond its geographical borders.

68 Uriel Heyd, *Foundations of Turkish Nationalism: the Life and Teachings of Ziya Gökalp* (London: Luzac and the Harvill Press, 1950), 79.

69 Umit Kurt, Dogan Gurpinar, “The Young Turk Historical Imagination in the Pursuit of Mythical Turkishness and its Lost Grandeur (1911-1914),” *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 43 (2016): 573.

70 The poem of the same with the same title was published by Gokalp in 1911 in the newspaper *Rumeli* under the signature Demirdash and in the periodical *Genç Kalemler* under the signature Tevfik Sedat (Heyd, *Foundations of Turkish Nationalism*, 126; Aleksandr Safaryan, *Հիյաւ Գոյքաւորի և «Թյուրքաւսմանը իմունքները» [Ziya Gökalp and “The Principles of Turkism”]* (Yerevan: YSU publication, 2012), 127-128).

71 Tekin Alp, *The Turkish and Pan-Turkish Ideal*, 13.



Later, in the “Principals of Turkism”, Gokalp highlights, that the poem “Turan” was written at a time when he was pondering the formation of Turkish national ideology. According to the author, the poem was published at a very deliberate time, as the “young souls”, glancing at the dangers of Ottomanism and Pan-Islamism,<sup>72</sup> were looking for a new ideology; the poem “Turan” became the first spark of this new national ideal.<sup>73</sup> This line of thought was retained and pushed forward by Halide Edib, who was ideologically influenced by Gokalp. The protagonist of the “New Turan”, a novel published in 1911 by Edib, was named after the Turkish ancestor Oghuz.<sup>74</sup> The novel demonstrates the contradiction between the two ideological currents – Ottomanism and Turkism – Oghuz represented the embodiment of Turkishness. Between 1911 and 1913, other prominent writers, such as Mehmed Ali Tevfik, Mehmet Emin Yurdakul, and Tekinalp, devoted a series of works to Turan.<sup>75</sup>

Collective identity is, as a singular phenomenon, subjective and selective in accordance with accompanying nationalist ideologies. Accordingly, specifically-chosen historic characters and personalities of Turkic origin had an immense impact on shaping the collective Turkish perception of morality. Rhetoric not only frames the demands placed on literary protagonists, but also defines the ethical code of conduct of the actors in the work.<sup>76</sup> The aim of these narratives and the images of chosen heroes was also to show that the Turks comprised a courageous nation that was chosen to rule over Christian subjects and capable of punishing disobedience of their rule. The unilateral protection of this same narrative of the past by CUP ideologues excluded the possibility of conflicting versions or “multiple histories” proliferating that could have damaged this newly constructed national identity. Multiple interpretations of history within the Turkic public conscience could only weaken the sense of identity which external events succeeded in “awakening”.<sup>77</sup>

Together, amid the ideal of Turan and historic research of a pan-Turkic past, the idea of racial kinship with other Turkic people emerged, in which shared racial characteristics with neighboring peoples of Central Asia connoted the existence of a singular, common “Turkish race” across the region. Gokalp believed in the moral superiority and great mission of the Turkish race.<sup>78</sup> Despite experiencing setbacks in conflicts, many ideologues shared a belief that the “miserable and unlucky Turkish race” would regain its dominant position within the Empire. As historian Köprülüzâde Mehmed Fuad writes: “I am a Turk, the son of a race whose essence is upright and great.”<sup>79</sup> One of the CUP’s military leaders, Ahmed Djemal,

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72 Pan-Islamism is a political ideology advocating the unity of Muslims under the Ottoman Caliphate. Sultan Abdul Hamid II (1876-1909) was the supporter of this ideology.

73 Safaryan, *Ziya Gokalp and “The Principles of Turkism”*, 128.

74 Ibid., 184.

75 Tekin Alp, *The Turkish and Pan-Turkish Ideal*, 14.

76 Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*, 199.

77 Ibid., 192.

78 Heyd, *Foundations of Turkish Nationalism*, 114.

79 Cited in Kurt, Gürpınar, “The Balkan Wars,” 353.

stated in his memoirs: “I am primarily an Ottoman, but I do not forget that I am a Turk, and nothing can shake my belief that the Turkish race is the foundation-stone of the Ottoman Empire. The educational and civilizing influence of the Turks cements Ottoman unity and strengthens the Empire, for in its origins the Ottoman Empire is a Turkish creation.”<sup>80</sup>

Hussein Jahid, in an article published in *Tanin* (under the heading “The ruling element and ruled”), explicitly claimed that Christian subjects had to acknowledge the power and superiority of the Turks. In Jahid’s words, the equality that was proclaimed under the new regime was solely a word; the Old Turks did not accept it, the Young Turks would not either.<sup>81</sup> In the poem “Crossing the Greek Border”, Mehmet Emin Yurdakul (1869-1944) exclaimed: “The word “Turk” encloses the covenant of the ancestors. The Turkish nation grew up from infancy by saying ‘we are Turks.’ Turks run towards the enemy with a bare sword. What kind of Turk would allow a bell tower to be built next to a mosque? Our people will not be a slave.”<sup>82</sup> The concept of the Christian world being biased against the Turkish race was reflected in the collective perception of the “unjust” rebellion of the Balkan nations against the authority of the Turks.

In order to move forward, the rationalization of the losses of the Italo-Turkish War and Balkan Wars were also integrated into this collective rhetoric. An author in *Senin*<sup>83</sup> wrote that the Turkish government would need to demand the settlement of the “Balkan question” on its terms; until the point for negotiations arrived, the newspaper called for collective patience for the sake of the country, as the consequence of an outburst of revenge and outbreaks of massacres of the Empire’s Christian population would bring a foreign intervention – a tangible concern of the CUP.<sup>84</sup> An article echoing this sentiment appeared in *Ikdam*, as well. The newspaper stressed that the political situation surrounding the losses of the Italo-Turkish and Balkan Wars was manipulated by people who used to excite the hatred of Muslims against Christians. The article’s author claimed it to be the source of all of the country’s misfortune in the last 150 years: “Yes, in this war Christianity has been unjust towards Moslems. But it would also be an injustice and especially at this moment, a blunder, to make our Christian compatriot responsible for this.”<sup>85</sup> The newspaper called for patience – not for the sake of the Christian compatriots, as it would seem from a glance, but because former massacres of the Empire’s Christians resulted in foreign interventions and secession of Ottoman lands.<sup>86</sup>

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80 Djemal Pasha, *Memoir of a Turkish Statesman, 1913-1916* (New York: George H. Doran Company, 1922), 251- 252.

81 “Turkey and the Turk,” *Armenia* (New York), June 1912, vol. V, No. 11.

82 Vladimir Gordlevskiĭ, *Очерки по новой османской литературе* [Essays on the New Ottoman Literature] (Moscow: Krestnyi Kalendar, 1912), Issue XXXIX, 104.

83 For being a pro CUP newspaper and semi-official, *Tanin* was suspended several times, especially during the six months from CUP forming an opposition (August 1912 - January 1913). It appeared under the names *Senin*, *Jenin*, *Renin*, *Hakk*, before reappearing as *Tanin*.

84 “The Turkish Press on the War,” *The Orient*, 30 October 1912, vol. III, No. 44.

85 “Balkan Equilibrium and Adrianople,” *The Orient*, 30 July 1913, vol. IV, No. 31.

86 Ibid.

Ahmed Emin's analyses of the Balkan Wars perhaps demonstrates the strongest, most clear rationalization of the situation. The journalist claimed that the Balkan possessions constituted a foe of the Ottoman Empire; the regions' population, according to Emin, was "heterogeneous and troublesome". Having racial and religious ties with neighboring Slavs, the Balkan states created instability and posed an internal danger for Turks. Emin clarified that their loss decreased the imperial burden of the Turks, noting that the aim of the country was no longer "a struggle for survival". Rather, these losses led to a redirection of national resources towards the development of the country, which became more homogeneous. He suggests that it would be better after "the amputation of the sick and energy-absorbing parts of the territory" to concentrate on the existing "Armenian" and "Arab problems".<sup>87</sup> In February of 1913, Hussein Jahid, following Emin, also brought the attention to the fact that the Empire's new problem following the losses of the Italo-Turkish and Balkan Wars constituted answers to either the "Armenian question" or the "Arab question".<sup>88</sup>

## Conclusion

By engaging in an intensive study of the Turkic past and incorporating it into contemporary propaganda through literary pieces, newspapers, and open lectures, it becomes possible to view how Turkish intellectuals began to nationalize the masses. In the process of constructing a national identity, these ideologues fueled the idea of a "dominant race" that already had been present in CUP rhetoric and literature, presenting the public with the images of Mongol and Hun conquerors and stories of their former glories and promising of a return to dominance if Turkish society was guided in the correct manner toward that goal. Ideologues like Gokalp and his contemporaries explained that the Turkish nation had a historical mission, and that sacrifices that were "generally regarded as impossible are not beyond human strength."<sup>89</sup> Citing Gokalp's vision: "nation is not a voluntary association like a political party which he may join at his own volition."<sup>90</sup> He argues that the elites and ideologues of Turkish nationalism needed to define the nation by defining its members and those who existed beyond its limits; the Ottoman Empire's defeats in the Italo-Turkish and Balkan Wars played an instrumental role in the success of this social engineering project. Ottoman newspapers systematically published news from the reports of the Society for the Publication of Documents on Balkan Atrocities (Mezalimi Neşri Vesaik Cemiyeti), rather than publish direct interviews with the emigrants. The organization was founded in late 1912, having been given the directive to publish booklets on the suffering and plight of Muslims at the hands of Bulgarian

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87 Emin, *The Development of Modern Turkey as Measured by its Press*, 112.

88 "Unity in Domestic Problems," *The Orient*, 5 February 1913, vol. IV, No. 6.

89 Heyd, *Foundations of Turkish Nationalism*, 113.

90 Gokalp, *Turkish Nationalism*, 136.

authorities. The compilation of these stories of atrocity was published in 1913 under the title of “The Red-Black Book.” Mehmed Ali Tevfik gave an account of his own feelings in *Tanin* upon reading the French version of the book: after learning about the atrocities committed against the Muslims and the Turks, “he turned into a wild animal seeking revenge.” Like other associated writers of the era, Tevfik places the culpability and blame of the disaster on Europe and highlights the potential of the atrocity to “awaken the national soul of the Turks and to give them a wolf’s nature.”<sup>91</sup>

Within the context of creating a “nation,” the aim of historians and public figures is to engineer a particular explanation of past grievances that can comprehensively explain the misfortunes of a present situation, before showing its target audience ways to solve these problems. According to contemporary journalist Aram Andonian, general call of the Young Turk press during this period was to take revenge for the losses in the Italo-Turkish and Balkan Wars in order to address the shame of defeat.<sup>92</sup> On 7 July, 1913, Jenab Shehabiddine, a poet, published a long article in the daily *Azm*, under the heading “A letter to my son,” which ends as follows: “The example of the Bulgarian army has taught us that every soldier facing the enemy must return to the days of barbarism, must have thirst of blood, must be merciless in slaughtering children and women, old and weak, must disregard others’ property, life and honor. Let us spread blood, suffering, wrong and mourning.”<sup>93</sup> The news of the atrocities committed against Muslims by the Bulgarian army also recounted the collaboration of local Christians with the armed forces. With the proper distribution of resources aimed at achieving this goal, national elites and ideologues could effectively “reimagine” the factors/peoples leading to the decline of the nation, set new national directives to ascend from a “degraded present” and instigate different patterns of collective action.<sup>94</sup>

During the Italo-Turkish and Balkan Wars – and within the wake of these conflicts – the image of the “other” was formalized and finalized: the nationalizing elite attributed the characteristics of the “other” to the Armenian and Greek citizens of the Empire. Following the Ottoman defeats in both aforementioned conflicts, the Turks were left face-to-face with their Christian compatriots, who were effectively depicted as a danger to the Empire and potential generator of a catastrophe similar to that which emerged in the Balkan Wars on account of deeply-established propaganda from the CUP ruling elite. In this context, the destruction of the “other” was not inevitable; however, this “atrocity propaganda” was meant to inspire the collective sentiment that the Turks had to exterminate the others in order to avoid extermination themselves – constituting a mindset which clearly corresponded to the CUP’s policy of creating a singular, homogeneous Turkish nation-state.<sup>95</sup> At the state

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91 Doğan Çetinkaya, “Atrocity propaganda and the nationalization of the masses in the Ottoman Empire during the Balkan Wars (1912-1913),” *Middle East Studies* 46 (2014): 766-767.

92 Andonian, *Complete Illustrated History of the Balkan War*, 888.

93 Emin, *The Development of Modern Turkey as Measured by its Press*, 108.

94 Levinger, Lytle, “Myth and Mobilization,” 190.

95 Edib, *Memoirs*, 333.

level, the Empire's press emphasized that no action or policy was deemed impossible to implement for the sake of saving the homeland; effectively predetermining the permissible limits that Turkish society could cross if placed in an "existential crisis."

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